

Lān² Nā as a Centre of Pāli Literature During the Late 15th Century

Research into Theravāda literature composed in Pāli has been concentrated so far on India, the homeland of Buddhism, and on the two major surviving traditions of Ceylon and Burma respectively. Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, on the other hand, have received comparatively little attention. This is obvious from two well-known, fairly comprehensive monographs, which were written long ago to describe the Pāli literature of both Ceylon and Burma.¹ As far as Thailand is concerned, however, there is only a slim, though important article by G. Coedès (1886–1969) on this subject. Less than a decade ago, this article was fortunately supplemented, but not superseded, by a substantial, well-researched study by Supaphan na Bangchang.² Unfortunately, this important contribution has had very little impact on international research on Pāli because it is written in Thai.

This progress in our knowledge of Pāli literature and of manuscripts preserved in Thailand was achieved only recently, so it comes as no surprise that Siamese manuscripts were hardly ever used when editions of the Pāli Text Society were prepared. These editions are almost exclusively based on material from Ceylon and Burma.³ In spite of this, it should not be forgotten that the earliest Pāli manuscripts

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¹Mabel Haynes Bode, *The Pāli Literature of Burma* (London, 1909); Gunapala Piyasena Malalasekera, *The Pāli Literature of Ceylon* (Colombo, 1928).

²G. Coedès, “Note sur les ouvrages pali composés en pays Thai”, *BEFEO* 15 (1915), pp. 39–46. Supaphan na Bangchang, *The Development of Pāli Literature Based on the Suttapiṭaka Composed in Thailand* (Bangkok, 1990; in Thai).

³An exception is the recently published new edition of the Sagāthavagga of the Saṃyuttanikāya by G.A. Somaratne (1999), cf. OLZ (in press).

traceable in Europe came from Siam. They are catalogued for the first time in the *Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Regiae* as early as 1739 and belong to the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris today. These manuscripts were used by Eugène Burnouf (1801–52) and Christian Lassen (1800–76) in their book *Essai sur le pali* inaugurating research on Pāli in Europe in 1826.⁴

For a short while, the printed version of the Tipiṭaka that was most widely used was the version printed in Siam (present-day Thailand) in 1893–94. That edition was gradually superseded by the Pali Text Society editions. The Siamese editions receded into the background also because of certain shortcomings. Their manuscript basis was not clearly defined in the introduction, for example, and different traditions seem to have been confused. This follows from a very brief remark in the Braḥ Rājabaṇṣāvatāra Chapāp Braḥ Rājahatthalekhā,⁵ which tells us that manuscripts in *ākṣara lāva* (“Lao letters”) and in *ākṣara rāmaṇa* (“Mon letters”) were used for “cleaning” and were then transcribed into *ākṣara khōm* (“Khmer letters”) as part of the preparation of the restitution of the Central Thai Pāli canon in Bangkok in 1788–89.⁶ Thus, it seems, the high value of the northern tradition was either not fully recognized at that time, or no good northern manuscripts were easily accessible in central Siam.

⁴E. Burnouf and Ch. Lassen, *Essai sur le pali ou langue sacrée de la presqu’île au-delà du Gange* (Paris, 1826) supplemented by E. Burnouf, *Observations grammaticales sur quelques passages de l’essai sur le pali* (Paris, 1827).

⁵Printed in Bangkok in I⁸2534, II⁸2535 (12455): ⁸1992, vol. II, p. 267. Cf. also: Dhani Nivat Kromamun Bidyalabh, “The Reconstruction of Rama I of the Chakri Dynasty”, *JSS* 43 (1955), pp. 21–48 = *Selected Articles from the Siam Society Journal*, Vol. IV (Bangkok, 1959), pp. 238–65; see especially, “Revision of the Buddhist Canon”, pp. 242ff.

⁶The introduction to the edition of the Tipiṭaka does not contain this information: O.v. Hinüber, “Einleitungen und Herausgeber früher Pāli-Drucke in Siam”, *Lex et Litterae: Studies in Honour of Oscar Botto* (Torino, 1997) [appeared in 1998, manuscript sent to the editor in 1986], pp. 237–57.

Consequently, it is no wonder that hardly anything was known outside Siam about the Lān² Nā tradition, where quite a few rather old Pāli manuscripts of partly excellent quality have survived.⁷

The vast majority of these northern manuscripts are fairly recent and do not even contain Pāli texts, but rather Thai Yuan literature. The oldest of these manuscripts dates back to the year C.S. 940 (A.D. 1578)⁸ and contains a highly interesting text on calculating the calendar, the *Adhikamāsavinicchaya*.⁹ Pāli manuscripts, some of which are quite old, form a small minority, about fifteen per cent, although this is only a very rough estimate. The Pāli texts contained in these manuscripts are both canonical Theravāda texts and works by local authors.

This northern tradition begins to emerge in A.D. 1471 with the oldest dated manuscript of a substantial fragment of a Jātaka text. About the same time, inscribed Buddha images also begin to appear in Lān² Nā, whereas stone inscriptions can be dated to a little earlier than A.D. 1471. It is revealing to compare the development of these three sources for written records. The comparative statistics for manuscripts copied during the 15th to the 17th centuries, for inscribed Buddha images, and for inscriptions show a parallel pattern:¹⁰

⁷However, important information on Northern Thai Pāli manuscripts is found in Harald Hundius, “The Colophons of Thirty Pāli Manuscripts from Northern Thailand”, *JPTS*, 14 (1990), 1–173; and in *Catalogue of Palm Leaf Manuscripts Kept in the Otani University* (Kyoto, 1995).

⁸“C.S.” is the Cūlasakkarāja era, which begins A.D. 638.

⁹*Lan Na Literature: Catalogue of Palm-Leaf Texts on Microfilm at the Social Research Institute* (Chiang Mai: Chiang Mai University, 1986), Section 6, no. 108.

¹⁰These figures are based on: Alexander B. Griswold, “Dated Buddha Images of Northern Siam”, *Artibus Asiae*, Supplementum XVI (Ascona 1957); Hans Penth, *Cārūk dī² braḥ buddharūp nai nagar jeṭṭhaṇ hmai¹* (Bangkok, 1976), and the figures given in H. Penth, *Bulletin of the Archive of Lanna Inscriptions*, 2 (1990), p. 18, as of 31 December 1989. The calculation of the number of manuscripts is based on my own observations.

| | Inscriptions on Stone or Bronzes | Buddha images | Manuscripts |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 14th century | 9 | — | — |
| 15th century | 109 (1450–1500: 98) | 35 (beg. 1465) | 10 (beg. 1471) |
| 16th century | 140 (95 prior to 1550) | 71 | 150 |
| 17th century | 25 | 8 | 50 |

All three branches of material thus concur in their respective numerical development, and consequently, the numbers of the surviving manuscripts and their distribution in time are not accidental but evidently mirror the so-called “golden age of Lān² Nā culture”¹¹ during the late 15th and early 16th centuries and the subsequent decline after the Burmese conquest in A.D. 1558. During the period preceding the Burmese annexation of northern Thailand, more Pāli works were composed in Lān² Nā than before or after. The best known work and the one that has been studied the most, because of the historical value of its content, is Ratanapañña’s *Jinakālamālīnī*, which was completed in A.D. 1527.¹² It is well known, though somewhat puzzling, that no northern manuscript of this text has come to light.

A second very productive author or compiler, Sirimaṅgala, whose works are dated between A.D. 1517 and 1524, is perhaps best known for his *Maṅgalatthadīpanī* and *Cakkavāḍadīpanī*.¹³ The latter text was written in A.D. 1520 and survives in a very old, fragmentary northern manuscript copied in C.S. 900 (A.D. 1538). Consequently, it is separated from Sirimaṅgala’s original by only eighteen years and by

¹¹H. Penth, *A Brief History of Lān Nā Civilizations of North Thailand* (Chiang Mai, 1994) pp. 13ff.

¹²O.v. Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature* (Berlin, 1996) (HPL) §428; H. Penth, *Jinakālamālīnī Index: An Annotated Index to the Thailand Part of Ratanapañña’s Chronicle Jinakālamālīnī* (Oxford and Chiang Mai, 1994), p. vi.

¹³HPL §§ 389, 400.

only fourteen years from the *Maṅgalatthadīpanī*. Therefore, it is not unlikely that Sirimaṅgala was still alive when this manuscript was copied. This then would be quite unique in the history, not only of Pāli manuscripts, but of any older Indian or Southeast Asian tradition.

Ñāṇakitti, the third author of the same period, is almost forgotten, though his work does deserve some attention. Ñāṇakitti’s work has been almost totally neglected up to now. This oblivion may be due in part to the fact that he was a grammarian who composed a fairly comprehensive commentary called *Kaccāyanarūpadīpanī*¹⁴ on Buddhapiya’s well-known *Rūpasiddhi*. An old, complete manuscript of this commentary comprising 15 *phūk* (bundles of twenty-four palm leaves each) that dates from C.S. 950 (A.D. 1588)¹⁵ is preserved today in the important collection of Vat Suñ Men in Phrae, a collection that consists mostly of the early 19th-century Pāli manuscripts brought together at the initiative of the monk Kañcana in the early 19th century.

The text itself has not been studied, and it seems no edition has been prepared. It is known only through the article by G. Cœdès, who had not seen the *Kaccāyanarūpadīpanī* himself, but who knew of a manuscript then extant in Cambodia. The colophon of the Phrae manuscript gives some information on Ñāṇakitti. It is said that he lived in the Panasārāma monastery situated to the northwest (*pacchima-uttara-bhāge*) of Abhinavapura, which is the Pāli name for Chiang Mai. The monastery has, unfortunately, resisted all attempts at identification. The author describes himself as well versed in all branches of grammar (*sakala-veyyākaraṇa-saṅga-ñāṇa*) and as having a full command of the *Tiṭṭaka* together with its commentaries.

¹⁴Cf. V. Trenckner, *A Critical Pāli Dictionary*, Vol. I (Copenhagen, 1924–48), Epilegomena (1948), pp. 1*–99*: 5.1.42.

¹⁵The donors, the *upāsakas* Ñein Tem Bā and Nān Suḍ Gām, who were husband and wife, originally deposited this manuscript in the Phra Khāv Bān monastery in Chiang Seen, from which a second manuscript containing the *Sammohavinodanī* (Vibh-a) copied in A.D. 1612 is extant and found in the Duang Dī Monastery in Chiang Mai today (film no. 04-031-00).

Although the date of composition is not mentioned, the name of the king who provided the building in the Panasārāma where Ñāṇakitti lived is given as Siri-Tibhuvanādicca-dhammarāja. Although no king of this name is known in Lān² Nā history, he can be identified without too much difficulty. In praising this king, the colophon continues: *laṅkābhidhānena suvaṃsajena rājādhirājena*. The form *laṅkā* is misleading at first, as it seems to indicate a Sinhalese king. Comparing colophons of other works by Ñāṇakitti, however, shows that the correct reading in *laka*. This, of course, is not a Pāli, but a northern Thai word. It is to be pronounced /lok/ and is used to name the sixth child, particularly in a royal family. Furthermore, Dāo² Lak¹⁶ is listed as a name of King Tilokah, who ruled Chiang Mai between 1441 and 1487. According to an oral communication made by Hans Penth in Chiang Mai long ago, Tiloka might well have coined his Pāli name on the model of the name of his contemporary and rival who ruled Ayuthayā between 1448 and 1488 as Phra Parama-Trailoka-nātha (Borommatrailokanath). Needless to say, Tiloka and Tibhuvana are synonyms.

This identification can be considered as accurate; so Ñāṇakitti lived during the reign of King Tiloka, most likely towards the end of the reign. For, as other dated works indicate, he may have outlived the king by at least fifteen years.

Besides the grammatical commentary briefly discussed above, there are two commentaries on the Vinaya and possibly eight on Abhidhamma texts written by Ñāṇakitti. It is uncertain whether there is, or ever has been, a complete set of subcommentaries on the entire Abhidhamma-piṭaka. The traces of a Kv-a-y and Yam-a-y are vague as they are found in the not entirely trustworthy handlist of the National Library in Bangkok, originally published in A.D. 1921.¹⁷ Three works

¹⁶Udom Rungrüangsri, *Bacanānukram Lān² Nā Daiy*, 2 vols. (Bangkok 1991) [reviewed in *ZDMG* 145 (1995), p. 238]; and *The Northern Thai Dictionary* (Bacanānukram Bhāsā Thin¹ Bhāg Hneüø) (Chiang Mai, 2539 = 1996).

¹⁷This list has been reprinted in *Bukkyō Kenkyū* (Buddhist Studies) (Hamamatsu) vol. 5 (1976), pp. 79-57.

of Ñāṇakitti are dated: The Dhātukathā-atthayojanā¹⁸ and the Pātimokkhaṅṭhipada were composed in A.D. 1493-94, and the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha-mahāṭīkā-yojanā, named Pañcīkā by Ñāṇakitti himself, in A.D. 1502-1503.¹⁹

The first commentary in the set explaining the Abhidhammatthakathā, the As-y, was written with astonishing speed. As one of the colophon verses states, it took Ñāṇakitti only nine months to finish this book comprising no less than 16 fascicles (*phūk*) or 248 printed pages in the Burmese edition of 1927:

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| ... dhīrena | therena Ñāṇakittinā |
| Aṭṭhasālīniyā attha- | yojanā sādhu saṅkhatā |
| Māghasiram upādāya | yāva Sāvaṇamāsato |
| navamāsehi niṭṭhānaṃ | sampattā atthayojanā. |

As-y B^e 1927 249, 12*-15*

The wise Elder Ñāṇakitti carefully composed the commentary on the Atthasālīnī, and the commentary reached its end in nine months from Māghasira (Nov.-Dec.) to the month of Sāvaṇa (July-Aug.).

This is in itself a rare statement found only three times in Pāli literature. The other two instances are the *nigamana* to the Samanta-pāsādikā stating that this text was composed during the 20th and 21st years of the King Sirinivāsa,²⁰ and the corresponding information provided by Sumaṅgalasāmi in the *nigamana* of his Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī-ṭīkā. This text comprises 169 pages in the Pali Text Society

¹⁸The dates and colophons are found in G. Coedès, as note 2, pp. 40f. The exact date of Dhātuk-a-y is slightly doubtful: *tathāgatassa parinibbānato navatiṇsādhikesu dvisu vassasahassesu paripuṇṇesu atikka-ntesu pacchā vasse ... catupaññāsādhika-aṭṭhasatasakkarāje assayuṇe māsassa kālapakkhajivādinabhūte dasamadine*: BE 2040 = A.D. 1497, but C.S. 854 = A.D. 1492 does not concur, unless Ñāṇakitti used the highly unlikely date 548 B.C. for the Nirvāṇa instead of 543 B.C. as is usual in Thailand.

¹⁹This text is only about half a century younger than Ariyavaṃsa's Maṇisāramañjūsā on the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha, composed in Burma in 1466. A comparative study on the methods of commenting on the text used in both these commentaries might yield interesting results.

²⁰HPL § 209.

edition and is said to have been composed in only twenty-four days, which is indeed a remarkable speed, even if, as H. Saddhatissa points out,²¹ this commentary is almost entirely based on the *Abhidhammattha-purāṇa-sannaya* by Sāriputta, Sumaṅgalasāmi's teacher.

Ñāṇakitti not only mentions the time he needed for his work, but also indicates the months during which he worked. Similarly, he states at the end of *Dhātuk-a-y* that this commentary was finished in the month of Assayuja (Sept.–Oct.) on the tenth day of the dark half of the month, which was a Thursday (*jīvadina*).²² Consequently, it seems not unlikely that this commentary was finished in October, immediately before he took up the work on the *As-y* in November. If this is correct, *As-y*, too, can be dated to A.D. 1492–93, although the *nigamana* does not contain a year. No direct or indirect date is available for any of the other *Abhidhamma* commentaries by Ñāṇakitti, including *Vibh-a-y*, which falls in between *As-y* and *Dhātuk-y* in the sequence of *Abhidhamma* texts.

A decade elapsed before Ñāṇakitti composed his last dated work, the *Pañcīkā*, which is a subcommentary to the highly popular handbook by Anuruddha, the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*.²³

²¹ *Abhidh-s* and *Abidh-s-mhṭ*, introduction, p. xix; cf. HPL § 346.

²² This and other colophons contain an interesting, though not entirely clear remark: *Ñāṇakittināma-dheyyena therena Haribhuñjayavāsinaṃ bhāsāya katā ayaṃ dhātukathāppakaraṇaṭṭhakathatthayojanā*. The meaning of *bhāsā* may follow Thai usage here, as H. Pentz suggests in a letter of 10 Sept. 1998: “following the way/understanding of the (monks) living in Lamphun”, which was a renowned seat of Theravāda scholarship in Ñāṇakitti's time.

²³ The oldest dated manuscript of *Abhidh-s* is no. 37 dated A.D. 1571 in the collection of the Siam Society, Bangkok; see O.v. Hinüber, “The Pāli Manuscripts Kept at the Siam Society, Bangkok: A Short Catalogue”, *JSS*, vol. 75, (1987), pp. 9–74.

Altogether, Ñāṇakitti wrote the following eleven commentaries:

I. Vinaya:

1. *Pātimokkhagaṇṭhīdīpanī* [*Pātim-gp-d*]: 1492–93; ms G. Cœdès,²⁴ number of *phūk* uncertain; *Epilegomena*:²⁵ 1.1,1;
2. *Samantapāsādikā-attha-yojanā* [*Sp-y*]: no date; S^e and mss at Phrae; 19 *phūk*; *Epilegomena* 1.2,14.

II. Abhidhamma:

3. *Atthasālinī-attha-yojanā* [*As-y*]: no date (perhaps 1492–93); C^e, B^e and ms at Phrae; 16 *phūk*; *Epilegomena* 3.1,15²;
4. *Sammohavinodanī-attha-yojanā* [*Vibh-a-y*]: no date; C^e, B^e and mss at Phrae; 16 *phūk*; *Epilegomena* 3.2,15²;
5. *Dhātukathā-attha-yojanā* [*Dhātuk-a-y*]: 1492–93; ms L^k, and mss at Phrae; 3 *phūk*; *Epilegomena* 3.3,15;
6. *Puggalapaññatti-attha-yojanā* [*Pg-a-y*]: no date; mss at Phrae; 1 *phūk*; [*Epilegomena* 3.4,15];
7. [*Kathāvatthu-attha-yojanā*] (*Kv-a-y*): existence uncertain; *Epilegomena* 3.5,15;
8. [*Yamaka-attha-yojanā*] (*Yam-a-y*): existence uncertain; *Epilegomena* 3.6,15;
9. *Paṭṭhāna-attha-yojanā* [*Paṭṭ-a-y*]: no date; ms G. Cœdès; number of *phūk* uncertain; [*Epil.* 3.7,15].
10. *Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī-attha-yojanā* [*Abhidh-a-mhṭ-y*]: 1502; S^e; [*Epil.* 3.8,1,22].

²⁴ This refers to the article mentioned in n. 2 above.

²⁵ *Epilegomena*, as in n. 14. Titles and their abbreviations and numbers not mentioned in the *Epilegomena* are put in brackets.

III. Veyyākaraṇa:

11. Kaccāyanarūpadīpanī (commentary on Buddhapiya: Rūpasiddhi):
no date; ms at Phrae; 15 *phūk*; Epilegomena 5.1.42.

As no research has been done on these commentaries, nothing is known about their exact contents. Sp-y suggests itself as a good starting point, for while only two books, Sp-y (S^e) and Abhidh-s-mhṭ-y (S^e), are provided with indexes in the printed editions, the latter text has only one general index, starting in a fairly comprehensive way in volume one, only to get slimmer and slimmer towards volume three, and ending on a decidedly discouraging note: *icc-evam-ādi padānaṃ anukkamo idh' evaṃ tāva veditabbo. aññāni pi nātukāmena sayam eva gavesitabbāni* (Abhidh-s-mhṭ-y III 601,9f.). "This is as far as the alphabetical list of words goes. Whoever wishes to know other [words], must search for himself."

The Samantapāsādikā-yojanā, on the other hand, also contains a small and incomplete list of Pāli works quoted. This provides some useful first information about books available to and used by Ñāṇakitti. Combining this information with some material collected at random from Sp-y, the following preliminary remarks can be made about these commentaries. Anybody used to reading Vinaya commentaries will be surprised, if not somewhat disappointed, by Sp-y, for, as a true grammarian, Ñāṇakitti explains the grammar of the Samantapāsādikā to such an extent that it is at times hard to see that he has before him a text on Buddhist law. The sophisticated legal discussions found in the works of his predecessors seem to be almost completely absent.

Obviously, Ñāṇakitti was not a *vinayadhara*. He arranges sentences in such a way as to show the syntactical construction, which is called *sambandha*. Much is said on word formation, on the meaning of sometimes quite well-known words, or on the use of cases. All this is, of course, based on Pāli grammars such as Buddhapiya's Rūpasiddhi

(Sp-y I 4,27), Moggallāna (Sp-y I 13,2) or Aggavaṃsa's Saddanīti.²⁶ Therefore it is difficult to avoid the impression that the Samantapāsādikā was used, if not misused, to instruct monks in the basics of grammar rather than in Vinaya.

More useful, and at times quite interesting, are the variant readings mentioned by Ñāṇakitti, but not preserved elsewhere in the manuscript tradition, e.g., *ūnaṃ onan ti pi ca pāṭhā*, Sp-y I 288,13 on Sp 297,30. Furthermore, etymologies such as the one of Kusinārā deserve some attention: *kuso hatthe etassa tveva atthi ti kusī, daṇḍādito ika iti suttana ī* (Kacc 368). *kusī ca sa nara cā ti kusinara, kusa-hatthaṃ naraṃ passivā māpitaṃ nagaraṃ kusinaraṃ*, Sp-y I 22,11–13, or of Pāli:²⁷ *pakaṭṭhā āli pāli atha vā atthaṃ pāti rakkhatī ti pāli*, Sp-y I 13,1 ref. to: *pātismā ḷi hoti, atthaṃ pāti rakkhatī ti pāli tanti*, Mogg VII 228 (uṇādi).

One aspect of Ñāṇakitti's works is of immediate interest, however. By quoting texts of other authors, he sheds some light on Lān² Nā literature, for these quotations not only demonstrate Ñāṇakitti's learning, but at the same time show which texts were available in Lān² Nā by the turn of the 16th century.

Apart from this immediate evidence of the presence of certain books, access to a complete Tipiṭaka should not have been a problem in Ñāṇakitti's time. Today it is. No monastery in the north, with the possible exception of Vat Suñ Men at Phrae, possesses anything like a complete set of the Tipiṭaka in manuscript form. Ñāṇakitti, on the other hand, witnessed, and in all likelihood also participated in, the eighth council according to Thai reckoning, convoked by King Tiloka in Chiang Mai at Vat Jet Yòt in A.D. 1477–78, where the king also had a

²⁶The quotation *anduyā bandhanaṃ andubandhanaṃ. saddanītiyaṃ pana addū ti vuttaṃ*, Sp-y II 212,14f. refers to § 447 *adi bandhane andati, andū*, Sadd 377,10, where the form *andu* is not mentioned.

²⁷For older explanations of and different opinions on the word *pāli* cf.: O.v. Hinüber, "On the History of the Pāli Language" (1977) in *Selected Papers on Pāli Studies* (1994), pp. 76–90.

library constructed to house the revised copy of the Tipiṭaka.²⁸ Explanatory literature such as the Aṭṭhakathā must have existed at Chiang Mai during that time as well. Thus the preconditions existed to make Nāṇakitti a true *sāṭṭhakathātipiṭakadhara*, a scholar “commanding the Tipiṭaka together with the commentary”, as he is called in his colophons.

The fairly incomplete index to the Thai printed edition of Sp-y traces altogether more than twenty quotations in this text. This number is at once reduced by one rather puzzling quotation from a text called “Vākyopaññāsa”, queried with much justification by the Thai editors. For *tathā ti vākyopaññāse vuttam*, Sp-y I 569,13 simply means “said at the beginning of the sentence”. Of course no such book exists.

It is certainly not surprising to find some quotations from canonical Suttas or Jātakas, nor is knowledge of the Buddhavaṃsa with its commentary, the Mahāvaṃsa, and the Thūpavaṃsa unexpected. Much more interesting is occasional information on relatively late Pāli literature. Thus it seems Nāṇakitti is the first to provide a source for the existence of the Visuddhajanavilāsinī, the commentary to the Apadāna. The earliest date for this otherwise undatable text was until now the oldest surviving manuscript, copied in A.D. 1557 and preserved at Vat Lai Hin.²⁹

Moreover, Nāṇakitti quotes the following Vinaya commentaries: Buddhaghosa’s Kaṅkhāvitaraṇī, the Vinayagaṇṭhipada (*i.e.* the Vajirabuddhiṭkā), Buddhadatta’s Vinayavinicchaya³⁰ with its commentary, the Vinayatthamañjūsā (*i.e.* the commentary on the Kaṅkhāvitaraṇī), the Khuddakasikkhāporāṇaṭīkā (Khudda-s-pt) and Khuddaka-sikkhā(bhinaṇa)ṭīkā (*i.e.* the Sumaṅgalappasādanī (Khudda-

s-ṭ)),³¹ the Uttaravinicchayaṭīkā, Vācissara’s Sīmālaṅkāra and his Sīmālaṅkārasaṃgaha. His quotations thus confirm the wrong attribution of the Kaṅkhāvitaraṇī to Buddhaghosa as well as Vinayagaṇṭhipada as the original, though rarely used, title of the Vajirabuddhiṭkā.³² *vinaya-gaṇṭhipade ... vuttam*.

If we accept the information given in the index to Sp-y, he even seems to know the name of the author of the otherwise anonymous commentary on the Uttaravinicchaya when he quotes a long and interesting paragraph on coins and currencies, ending in a number of verses:

Uttaravinicchayaṭīkāyaṃ³³ pana:

missakakahāpaṇo yeva nīlakahāpaṇo. tath’ eva hi porāṇasatthavihitalakkhaṇaṃ
[°taṃ lakkh°] dissati. [kathaṃ] pañca māsā suvaṇṇassa, tathā
rajaṭassa, dasa māsā tambassā ti ete vīsati māse missetvā
bandha[na]tthāya vīhimattaṃ lohaṃ pakkhipitvā akkharāṇaṃ [°āni]
ca hatthipādādānam [hatthi-ādānam ?] aññataraṇi ca rūpaṃ dassetvā
kato niddosattā nīlakahāpaṇo nāma hoti. [= Utt-vin-ṭ Be II 407,23–
408,5]

honti c’ ettha:

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <i>hemarajatatambehi</i> | <i>satthe niddiṭṭhalakkhaṇaṃ</i> |
| <i>ahāpetvā kato vīsa-</i> | <i>māso nīlakahāpaṇo</i> |
| <i>hemapādaṃ sajjhupādaṃ</i> | <i>tambapādadvayaṃ hi so</i> |
| <i>missetvā rūpaṃ appetvā</i> | <i>kātuṃ satthe sudassito</i> |
| <i>elo [elā] ti vuccate doso</i> | <i>niddosattā tathārito [tathārito]</i> |
| <i>tassa pādo suvaṇṇassa</i> | <i>vīsavihagghanāmakō</i> |
| | <i>[°agghano māso]</i> |
| <i>yasmiṃ pana padese so</i> | <i>na vattati kahāpaṇo</i> |
| <i>vīsasovaṇṇavīhagghaṃ</i> | <i>tappādagghaṃ ti vedīyaṃ</i> |
| <i>vīsasovaṇṇavīhagghaṃ</i> | <i>thenentā bhikkhavo tato</i> |
| <i>cavanti sāmāññaṇā</i> | <i>icc’ āhu vinayaññuno ti</i> |

²⁸Penth, *Jinakālamālīnī Index*, (as note 12 above) p. 218; see also, E.W. Hutchinson, “The Seven Spires: A Sanctuary of the Sacred Fig Tree at Chiang Mai”, *JSS* vol. 39 (1951), pp. 43ff.

²⁹HPL § 302.

³⁰This is quoted as Vinayavinicchayaṭīkā, Sp-y II 232,29.

³¹On these commentaries cf. Heinz Braun and Anne Peters, *Burmese Manuscripts*, Part 3 (Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland Band XXIII,3; Stuttgart, 1996), nos. 715, 716.

³²HPL § 367.

³³The usually correct wording in Utt-vin-ṭ is given in brackets, where it differs from Sp-y, and is preferred as the basis of the translation.

[= Utt-vn-ṭ Be II 409,4*-13*] *Vācissaranāmakācariyena vuttaṃ*, Sp-y I 288,15-89,12 (on Sp 297,30).

[It is said], however, in the commentary on the Uttaravinicchaya:

A *nīlakahāpaṇa* is a composite *kahāpaṇa*. For this characteristic can be found described in ancient handbooks. How? A flawless *nīlakahāpaṇa* is made when five *māsa* of gold and [five *māsa*] of silver [plus] ten *māsa* of copper — these twenty *māsa* — are mixed. For better coherence an amount of iron corresponding only to the size of a grain of rice is added [and] letters and one of the marks such as an elephant, etc., are shown [on the coin].

And there are [the following verses]:

A *nīlakahāpaṇa* of twenty *māsa* [that is] not deficient in the characteristics described in the handbooks is made out of gold, silver, [and] copper. For it is well described in the handbooks that it is made by mixing a *pāda* of gold,³⁴ a *pāda* of silver, two *pādas* of copper, and by adding a mark. A fault is called *ela*,³⁵ because of [describing *nīlakahāpaṇa* as] being without fault, it has been said in this way [in the preceding verses]. A *pāda* of this gold [is called] a *māsa* equivalent to twenty grains of rice. In a country where a *kahāpaṇa* is not a currency, the value of a *pāda* should be understood as corresponding to twenty grains of rice in gold. Monks stealing gold [equal in] value twenty grains of rice fall from the virtues of an ascetic as a consequence. So say those who are knowledgeable in the Vinaya.

This has been said by the Teacher Vācissara.”³⁶

Ñāṇakitti's reference to Vācissara at the end of this paragraph sounds quite exciting at first. When checking the relevant paragraph itself, however, it becomes clear at once that these verses are quoted in the Uttaravinicchayaṭīkā as well, although no source is indicated. But even if Ñāṇakitti succeeded only in identifying their author correctly, which we are unfortunately unable to verify, some of the excitement would remain. For Vācissara, who lived in Ceylon during the late 13th

³⁴According to Vin III 45,11 five *māsaka* correspond to one *pāda*.

³⁵Cf. CPD s.v. *ela*.

³⁶This text is not quoted by Charan Das Chatterjee: “Some Numismatic Data in Pāli Literature”, in: *Buddhist Studies*, ed. by Bimala Churn Law. Calcutta 1931, p. 383-452.

century and is best known as the author of the Thūpavaṃsa,³⁷ also wrote on the Vinaya. Two short texts on *sīmā* problems survive in manuscripts, the Sīmālaṅkāra and the Sīmālaṅkārasaṅgaha.³⁸ Consequently, Ñāṇakitti would be right in saying this only if he referred to an otherwise unknown work on Vinaya by Vācissara, for verses on money that obviously refer to the second Pārājika would be quite unexpected in any discussion on *sīmā*.

Therefore, if the verses quoted in the Uttaravinicchayaṭīkā were actually composed by Vācissara, this could provide a date *ante quem* (13th century) of this otherwise undated commentary. A two-hundred-year range between the 13th and the end of the 15th centuries is not unacceptable given the fact that we can give precise dates for Pāli texts of hardly any period.

Furthermore, Ñāṇakitti even traces the sources of two quotations found within the text of the Samantapāsādikā: *iti vaje — pe* [i.e., *satthe nāvāyan ti tīsu ṭhānesu natthi vassacchede āpatti,*] — *pavāretuñ ca labhatī ti* (Sp 1072,4f.) *porāṇaṭṭhakathāvacane*, Sp-y II 280,8; and again *yena akataṃ tena kātabbam, yaṃ ca akataṃ taṃ kātabbam* (Sp 830,8)³⁹ *ti Sīhaḷaṭṭhakathāpāṭhe*, Sp-y II 83,1. Although both these short texts are also marked as quotations in the Samantapāsādikā, no source is indicated, nor are they identified by any of the predecessors of Ñāṇakitti who are known to us, such as Vajirabuddhi, Sāriputta, or Kassapa Coḷa. Therefore, Ñāṇakitti could not draw this information from an older commentary but had to rely on his own knowledge.

This at once raises the interesting though difficult question whether Ñāṇakitti could have had immediate access to these very old texts which he gives as the sources of the quotations and which had been superseded

³⁷HPL § 192.

³⁸HPL § 339; cf. P. Kieffer-Pülz, “Vācissara's Sīmālaṅkārasaṅgaha and the Disagreement between Coḷiyas and Sīhaḷas”, *Buddhist Studies* (Hamamatsu), vol. 28 (1999), pp. 11-18.

³⁹It is interesting to note that this sentence is commented upon in the Samantapāsādikā.

by the Samantapāsādikā a millennium before his own time. However, they were still available in 12th century Ceylon.⁴⁰ Consequently, if Ñāṇakitti could still use the old Sinhalese commentaries, they must have survived much longer than is usually assumed. Although it seems at first highly unlikely, if not impossible, that this unexpected knowledge was available in Lān² Nā far away from Ceylon in the 15th century, we have to keep in mind that at the beginning of the 15th century twenty-five monks from Chiang Mai travelled to Ceylon for higher studies.⁴¹ Therefore it is not as far-fetched as it might seem at first that knowledge even of these commentaries was brought back to Lān² Nā, and moreover, it is not impossible to imagine that part of the oral tradition, including information about quotations in the important Vinaya texts, was acquired by the travelling monks in Anurādhapura.

Even if this problem cannot be solved, it raises the more general question of Ñāṇakitti's international position and that of his work during his lifetime and after. At the same time this can open a new perspective on Ñāṇakitti's activities within the context of Theravāda literature.

A general survey of commentaries on the Theravāda canon shows that there are two types of commentaries or commentators. On the one hand, there are large sets of commentaries by a single author such as Buddhaghosa, and on the other hand there are commentators who concentrated on only a single text such as the Vajirabuddhi. Once the commentarial literature is viewed from this angle, it is immediately obvious that the vast majority of this literature is connected to the names of only four authors: Buddhaghosa, Dhammapāla, Sāriputta, and finally, Ñāṇakitti. This leads to two questions: Why were these truly

voluminous texts written at a certain point in the development of Theravāda literature? And why were they written in specific areas?

The answers are obvious only with respect to Sāriputta, because the motives for his literary activity are well known. He explained the Vinaya at the request of Parakkamabāhu I (1153–86), who needed these very texts for his Saṃgha reforms in the 12th century. It is not unlikely that Buddhaghosa worked under similar circumstances when he composed the Visuddhimagga as the definitive handbook of Theravāda orthodoxy and as a centrepiece around which he grouped the commentaries on the first four Nikāyas of the Suttapiṭaka. During the same period, the commentaries on the Vinayapiṭaka and the Abhidhammapiṭaka were developed as well, though not created by Buddhaghosa, as is erroneously assumed by the Theravāda tradition.⁴² If the generally accepted date for Buddhaghosa is correct, he was active at a time when the Mahāvihāra at Anurādhapura successfully sought to re-establish itself after having been almost completely suppressed by the rival fraternity of the Abhayagirivihāra.

Nothing at all is known about Dhammapāla's background; his productivity was impressive, next only to Buddhaghosa's.⁴³

Looking at Ñāṇakitti's work from the same perspective, he suddenly gains a surprisingly prominent position in the history of Theravāda literature, and, at the same time, his presumed intentions and programme become visible. Ñāṇakitti lived during or shortly after a period of active exchange of Buddhist monks between Ceylon and Lān² Nā under a king who, not unlike Parakkamabāhu, tried to renew Buddhism. The council convoked by King Tiloka has been mentioned above. In this connection it makes more sense to follow earlier

⁴⁰W. B. Bollée, "Die Stellung der Vinayaṭikās in der Pāli-Literatur", in XVII. Deutscher Orientalistentag vom 21. bis 27. Juli 1968 in Würzburg, Vorträge Teil 3. (ZDMG Supplementa I. Wiesbaden, 1969), pp. 824–35.

⁴¹Pentth, *Jinakālamālinī Index* (as note 12 above), p. 114; cf. also, E.W. Hutchinson, "The Seven Spires" (as note 28 above), pp. 40, 34f.

⁴²A survey of the authors and a tentative chronology of the commentaries on the Theravāda Tipiṭaka is found in HPL § 307.

⁴³Buddhaghosa's commentaries comprise approximately 5,000 printed pages; the Abhidhamma commentaries, approximately 1,700 printed pages; the Samantapāsādikā, approximately 1,500 printed pages. Dhammapāla's commentaries, on the other hand, comprise more than 2,700 printed pages.

examples and have commentaries written as well. The close connection between King Tiloka or Siri-Tibhuvanādicca and Ñāṇakitti is quite evident from the colophons. Furthermore, Ñāṇakitti's programme could have been inspired by the model from Ceylon because the pattern of his commentaries clearly imitates earlier examples. There are no explanations of the Suttapiṭaka, which had dropped into the background long before, while scholarly activities of Theravāda monks such as Kassapa Coḷa concentrated on both the Vinaya and Abhidhamma.

Viewed from this angle, Ñāṇakitti's activities can be seen as part of the flowering of Lān² Nā culture before and after the year 1500, and this was not only due to his work. If we take into consideration the great number of extant Pāli manuscripts copied during this period, Lān² Nā was for a short time a late centre of Pāli literature, and perhaps the importance of this activity was understood at the time.

In contrast to his illustrious predecessors, however, Ñāṇakitti failed to gain the same international recognition. This is only too evident from the rarity of manuscripts of his works even in Thailand. And no manuscript seems to be known outside Thailand, Laos or Cambodia. Thus, the Sinhalese print of the Vibh-a-y of 1892 states expressly that the manuscript material was provided by the then king of Siam, Chulalongkorn (1853-1910, reigned from 1868). Neither the Sāsanavaṃsa, the Gandhavaṃsa, nor the Piṭakatthamañ (Piṭakat-samuñ) mentions his name.

This shows that Lān² Nā was only a local centre of Pāli literature and not of any international significance. It never exercised any recognizable influence on either Burma or Ceylon. And, as far as the work of Ñāṇakitti is concerned, this failure to win international appreciation in the Theravāda world may be due in large part to the somewhat limited information his exercises in grammar provide. The lack of new ideas in continuing the discussion of controversial points in both the Vinaya and the Abhidhamma does not immediately appeal to the reader.

Another reason may have been the political development. The Burmese conquered Lān² Nā in 1558, half a century after Ñāṇakitti. After that event, the Lān² Nā Pāli tradition merged with, or was absorbed by, the exegetical tradition of Burma which was stronger, older, and much better. Thus it seems that the Burmese prevailed not only politically but also culturally, pushing back into near oblivion a short-lived attempt of a local culture to establish itself in the world of Theravāda Buddhism. Although that attempt ultimately failed, it does deserve to be remembered as a late phase of Pāli literature.

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